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THE IMAGE OF GOD: A STUDY OF AN ANCIENT SENSIBILITY

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In presenting her list of ten sensibilities, Vanessa Ochs is doing what Jewish intellectuals have done for centuries–interpreting biblical and rabbinic concepts through ideals and values that capture the ethical imagination of her own time and place. Each of these concepts has a wide range of meanings and applications in the broader Jewish tradition. Considering that full range both provides a context for understanding Vanessa's particular choices and may open up possibilities for Jewish thinking that are currently latent. I will focus here on one of the ten–the motif that humans are in the image (*tzelem*) of God. First, I will discuss the meanings of this image in biblical and classical rabbinic sources. Then, I will turn to a similar but probably less familiar motif–the idea that humans are created in the image of the cosmos (*'olam*), which opens up another set of possibilities for thinking about the significance of human embodiment.[1]

[1] These themes have received extensive scholarly examination. See especially the recent essay with extensive references by Alon Goshen Gottstein, who emphasizes the bodily connotations of "image" and "likeness" in rabbinic sources: "The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature," *Harvard Theological Review* 87/2 (1994): 171-195; also Ephraim Urbach,

The idea that humans are in the image of the deity is at the same time anthropological and theological. There is some correspondence or association between the human and the divine (each is a metaphor of the other), but the specifics of that association are not fixed. We cannot answer the question, "What does it mean in Jewish tradition for humans to be in the image of God?" The phrase, rather, opens up a particular terrain for reflection and debate, being a discursive space of immense significance that can be filled in all sorts of ways, often with strong rhetorical purposes. It also can carry a political charge–in a cultural context where a king claims to have a distinct connection to the divine, this claim presents a challenge to that authority, asserting that all people are in the image of the deity.[2]

Three questions are salient in describing how specific persons or groups have developed the biblical assertion that humans are in the image of God. First, since the key verses turn on the word *'adam*, does an exegete treat the verse as applicable to all humans, to specific humans (such as men, Jews, or rabbis), or specifically to the first human named Adam? Passages that focus upon Adam, for example, often emphasize that humans *lack* godly features, that Adam originally had divine qualities that have since been lost to the rest of humanity.[3] A second question is, what aspects of *'adam* constitute the image of God? What parts of the self are upheld as divine? A given interpreter may highlight immaterial elements such as the soul or mind, or material ones such as the body or a specific part of it. In *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, for example, one passage focuses on the penis, citing Genesis 1:27 to argue that Adam was among a

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The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs, trans. Israel Abrahams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 217.

[2] Samuel E. Loewenstamm argues, with reference to Ancient Near Eastern materials, that this significance was present in ancient Israel. See "Man as Image and Son of God" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 21/1 (1957):1-2.

[3] See Goshen Gottstein, "The Body as Image of God," 183-186; I thank Elaine Pagels for her comments on an earlier version of this section.

number of figures who were born circumcised (*'Abot R. Nat. A*, ch. 2).[4] Third, especially when the verse is understood as referring to human beings, what does the writer or speaker want people to do, given that they are created in the divine image?

In some cases, the point is quite general, as in the rabbinic maxim that humans are "beloved" because of being in the divine image (*'Abot* 3:14).[5] However, strong homiletic or pedagogical roles are common, even or especially in the biblical text itself. The scriptural grounding of the motif is in Genesis 1:26-28 and 9:5-7. Neither passage specifies exactly what part of humans constitutes the divine image, but both cite the motif to uphold particular practices. The first appears in the account of the sixth day of creation: "And God created man (*'adam*) in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and God said to them, 'Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on the earth'" (Gen. 1:26-27; following the JPS translation). Being in the image of God legitimates dominion over the creatures of the earth, even if the text never states exactly how humans reflect God.

In the second case, the issue at stake is quite different: "But for your own life blood I will require a reckoning: I will require it of every beast; of man, too, will I require a reckoning for every human life, of every man (*'adam*) for that of his fellow man! Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in His image did God make man. Be fertile, then, and increase; abound on the earth and increase on it" (Gen. 9:5-7; following the JPS translation). Again, the text does not show concern with what aspects of humans constitute the "image" but rather addresses practical implications. In this case, the claim supports the prohibition of manslaughter and the relevant legal retribution. Several cases of rabbinic exegesis build on these points. For example, one passage strengthens the

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[4] See Solomon Schechter, *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan, Edited from Manuscripts with an Introduction, Notes, and Appendices* (Hebrew) (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1997), 12; also Urbach, *Sages*, 230, 788 n.50; Goshen Gottstein, "The Body as Image of God," 175.

[5] Citing Gen. 9:6; see also *'Abot R. Nat. A*, ch. 39; Schechter, *R. Nathan*, 118.

emphasis on killing by linking Genesis 9:6 with the Decalogue prohibition on murder (*Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael*, *Ba-Hodesh* 8). In another, one sage cites Genesis 9:6 to argue that bloodshed diminishes the likeness of God, while others emphasize the end of the verse that calls for procreation to say that reproduction is a central responsibility of those who are created in the image of God (*t. Yebamot 8:7*; *b. Yabamot 63b*).[6]

Another interpretation of Genesis 9:6–found in *R. Nathan*, Version B as well as the midrashic collection *Leviticus Rabbah* –centers on the body and calls for its care. In *R. Nathan B* the exegetical context is a teaching attributed to the first century R. Yose, "Let all your actions be for the sake of heaven."[7] The commentators assert that one should do so "like Hillel" and present two stories to illustrate and justify this point:

> When Hillel would leave to go some place, they would say to him,
> Where are you going? I am going to fulfill a commandment.
> Which commandment, Hillel?
> I am going to the toilet.
> Is that a commandment?
> Hillel said to them, Yes, so that one would not degrade the body.
>
> Where are you going Hillel?
> I am going to fulfill a commandment. Which commandment, Hillel?
> I am going to the bath house.
> Is that a commandment?
> He said to them, Yes, to clean the body.
>
> Know for yourself that this is so. If it is the case that, for statues standing in the palaces of kings, the government gives an allowance every year to the one appointed to polish and shine them, and not only that, but he is raised up among the important people in the kingdom–then for us, who are created in the image and likeness, as it is written, "For in the image of

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[6] See the analysis in Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 318-321; *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, *Ba-Hodesh* 8; H. S. Horovitz and I. A. Rabin, eds., *Mechilta d'Rabbi Ishmael* (Jerusalem: Shalem Books, 1997), 233; *t. Yebam.* 8:7; *b. Yabam.* 63b; and Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 134-136; Goshen Gottstein, "The Body as Image of God," 190-192.

[7] See *'Abot R. Nat. B*, ch. 30; *'Abot R. Nat. A*, ch. 17; Schechter, *R. Nathan*, 65-66; *Fathers* 2:12.

> God He made the human" (Gen 9:6), how much the more! (*'Abot R. Nat. B*, ch. 30).[8]

Hillel focuses here upon the body as an entity that excretes and that gets dirty. In other contexts, excretion is characterized as beastly and a reason to be humble before God, yet this set of teachings predicate the animal features of humans as being similar to the divine rather than in contrast.[9] The comparison has a distinct pedagogical purpose: a person should care for the body, and toilets as well as baths are central to this care.[10] This point is made in a manner that also makes a political statement, juxtaposing a statue of a king with the human body, and implicitly the king himself with God. Upholding the human body over the statue also asserts that God is greater and more important than a human ruler (even or especially if the ruler claims divine status or favor for himself).

I will now turn to a similar motif in late ancient sources: humans are not only in the image of God, but in the image of the world or cosmos (*'olam*). Here rabbinic thought is quite far from modern or post-modern sensibilities, but it has significant affinities with the many cultures in history, located in regions now known as Europe, South Asia, and China, in which homologies between the body and the cosmos have been situated amidst of broad webs of correlations between the human, the social order,

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[8] See Schechter, *R. Nathan*, 66; also *Lev. Rab.* 34:3 Mordecai Margulies, *Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1993), 775-777.

[9] Note that this way of comparing the body with the divine is similar to, but not the same as, prayers that thank God for the proper function of orifices; on the latter, see the discussion in Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 34- 35.

[10] On the character and importance of bath houses for Jews in Late Antiquity, see Yaron Eliav, "Did the Jews at First Abstain from Using the Roman Bath House?" (Hebrew) *Cathedra* 7 (1995): 3-35; he discusses the parallel to this story in *Lev. Rab.* 34:3 on 30-31; "The Roman Bath as a Jewish Institution: Another Look at the Encounter Between Judaism and the Greco-Roman Culture," *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, 31/4 (2000): 416-454. Urbach cites the version of this story in *Leviticus Rabbah*, juxtaposing it with Philo's anthropology in *Sages*, 226-227, and Nissan Rubin cites the same version to argue that, "In the Tannaitic generations before the destruction of the Temple, we do not hear of any opposition between the body and the soul;" Nissan Rubin, "The Sages Conception of the Body and Soul." In *Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society*, edited by S. Fishbane and J. Lightstone (Concordia: 1990), 56. See also Goshen Gottstein, "The Body as Image of God," 174-175.

and the world. The specific ways of framing these relations have varied tremendously, and they have been employed for or implicit in many practices, including but not only sacrifice, diet, medicine, divination, law, legitimating political and social order, music, historiography, broad explanation of change and transformation, and even restoring lost hair.[11] In classical rabbinic thought, microcosmic imagery appears sporadically and outside of such practical contexts. It is best understood as a way of celebrating the embodied human in detail, and like the motif of being in the divine image, there is a homiletic purpose. In the case that follows, which is the most elaborate account of the human body as a microcosm, the ultimate goal is to support the claim that sustaining a person's life is weighed equally with sustaining all of creation: each part of every person correlates with a distinct part of the created world.[12]

The literary context is a numerical list, "With ten utterances the world was created."[13] The commentators presume that this detail must have pedagogical significance:

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[11] The literature on these topics is tremendous. Works that I have found particularly helpful are See Bruce Lincoln, *Myth, Cosmos, and Society: Indo-European Themes of Creation and Destruction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 1-40; Aihe Wang, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); John Henderson, *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 1-58; David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), esp. 184-262.

[12] Another example of microcosmic thinking appears in the late extracanonical tractate *Derek Eretz Zuta*, in which the eye appears as having elements corresponding to the ocean, the world, Jerusalem, and a vision of the future Temple. The passage is, "Abba Isi ben Yohanan in the name of Samuel the Small says: This world is similar to the eyeball of a human (*'adam*). The white that is in it is the ocean that surrounds the entire world. The black [i.e., the iris] that is in it, this is the world. The pupil that is in the black, this is Jerusalem. The image that is in the pupil, this is the Temple that will be built quickly, in our days, and in the days of all Israel, Amen;" *Der. Er. Zut.* 9:13; Higger, *Derekh Eretz*, 150-151; also Preuss, *Talmudic Medicine*, 68 and Urbach, *Sages*, 233.

[13] See *'Abot R. Nat. A*, ch. 31; *'Abot R. Nat. B*, ch. 39; Schechter, *R. Nathan*, 90; *'Abot* 5:1. This statement is likely derived from the observation that the phrase "and God said" appears nine times in Genesis One and once in Genesis Two.

> What need do those who enter the world have for this?[14]
>
> To teach you that anyone who carries out one commandment, anyone who observes one Sabbath, and everyone who sustains one life, Scripture accounts it to him as if he sustained the entire world (*'olam*), which was created with ten utterances (*'Abot R. Nat. A*, ch. 31).[15]

The phrase "Scripture accounts it to him as if." often appears in rabbinic sources convey that an apparently small act will generate large consequences. Here, one good act is said to bring the same reward as if one preserved the entire world, and of the three acts listed, the key one for the larger sequence is sustaining one life. The next passages turn to the question of transgression–a negative act destroying the world–and center on the figure of Cain. These two discussions, positive and negative, culminate in the statement: "Thus you learn that one person (*'adam*) is weighed in correspondence to the entire work of creation."[16]

How do the commentators justify this point midrashically? They draw upon two verses in Genesis:

> Rabbi Nehemiah says, from where do we derive that one person (*'adam*) is weighed in correspondence to the entire work of creation? For it is said, "This is the book of the generations (*toladot*) of Adam (*'adam*). On the day that God created Adam, in the likeness of God He made him" (Gen 5:1). And there it says, "These are the generations *toladot*) of the heavens and the earth when they were created, on the day that the Lord God made earth and heavens." (Gen 2:4). Just as in the other case there was creation and making, so too here there is creation and making (*'Abot R. Nat. A*, ch. 31).[17]

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[14] On this question, see Kister, *Studies*, 42 and *'Abot R. Nat. A*, ch. 32; Schechter, *R. Nathan*, 92-93.

[15] See Schechter, *R. Nathan*, 90; contrast *'Abot* 5:1

[16] I discuss "Scripture accounts it to him as if." in *Making of a Sage*, Chapter Three. The discussion of negative acts is probably a development of material in *m. Sanh.* 4:5; see also *'Abot R. Nat. A*, ch. 3; Schechter, *R. Nathan*, 17; Kister, *Studies*, 138. The rhetorical move of comparing a person to the cosmos as a way of upholding individual lives and contemning killing is similar to citing biblical verses stating that humans are in the image of God to support the prohibition against murder (see my discussion above).

[17] See Schechter, *R. Nathan*, 91.

The exegesis centers on the words "create" (*b.r.'.*) and "make" (*'.s.h.*). Both terms appear in describing the creation of Adam and the creation of the world, and the midrashic claim is that this similarity indicates that both are equal in the divine accounting. The ensuing discussion, though, shifts attention to the word "generations" (*toladot*), which also is used in relation to both the world and Adam, to state that Adam saw all of the generations that would come upon the earth.[18]

The final passage in the unit presents the homologies between the human body and the cosmos. The term *'adam* is ambiguous here, for it can refer to humans in general (as in the first teaching) or Adam (as in the second). Because of the focus on cosmogony and anthropogony in the literary unit as a whole, I see the text as concerning "Adam," but here with the qualities of the first human representing those of all people.

The opening is a parable that puns on the words for "form" (*y.tz.r.*) and "draw" (*tz.y.r.*):

> A parable: to what can this matter be compared? To one who takes some wood and wants to draw many forms, but does not have room to draw– he is frustrated. But one who draws on the earth can go ahead and spread them out. Yet, the Holy One, blessed be He, may His great name be blessed for ever and ever, in His wisdom and understanding created the entire world, all of it, and created the heavens and the earth, the beings on high and the those below, and He formed in Adam everything that He created in his world (*'Abot R. Nat. A*, ch. 31).[19]

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[18] This motif appears in *Genesis Rabbah* to Gen 5:1, and the later midrashic collection *Exodus Rabbah* includes the specification that the future generations emerge from Adam's body; see *Gen. Rab.* 24:2 (Theodor-Albeck, *Bereschit Rabba*, 230-231); *Exod. Rab.* 40:3; Goshen Gottstein, "The Body as Image of God," 192-193).

[19] See Schechter, *R. Nathan*, 91. In the Oxford manuscript of *R. Nathan A*, the unit is attributed to R. Yose ha-Gelili, and Schechter includes this in his text. The opening here is: "R. Yose Ha-Gelili says, Everything that the Holy One, blessed by He created in the Earth He created in Adam" (Schechter, *R. Nathan*, 91 n.8). Somewhat similar puns appear in the *Mekilta of R. Ishmael*, *Beshallah* 8 (Horovitz-Rabin, *Mechilta d'Rabbi Ishmael*, 144).

Then, we find a long list specifying this formation, each time asserting the close relation between humans/Adam (*'adam*) and the world or cosmos (*'olam*):

> He created bushes in the world and He created bushes in Adam: this is Adam's hair.
>
> He created evil animals in the world and He created evil animals in Adam: this is Adam's vermin.
>
> He created channels in the world and he created channels in Adam: these are Adam's ears.[20]
>
> He created wind in the world and He created wind in Adam: this is Adam's nose.[21]
>
> Sun in the world and sun in Adam: this is Adam's forehead.
>
> Filthy water in the world and filthy water in Adam: this is Adam's nasal mucus.
>
> Salty water in the world and salty water in Adam: this is Adam's urine.[22]
>
> Rivers in the world and rivers in Adam: these are [Adam's] tears.
>
> Walls in the world and walls in Adam: these are Adam's lips.
>
> Doors in the world and doors in Adam: these are Adam's teeth.
>
> Firmaments in the world and firmaments in Adam: this is Adam's tongue.
>
> Sweet water in the world and sweet water in Adam: this is Adam's saliva.

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[20] This is following Goldin's interpretation in *R. Nathan,* 127, 204nn.15,16. Another is "He created destructive insects in the world and He created destructive insects in Adam: these are Adam's intestinal worms." See also Schechter, *R. Nathan*, 92 n.12; Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, The Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: The Judaica Press, 1992), 1343-1344.

[21] Goldin translates "breath" for "nose" in *R. Nathan*, 127 and 204 n.17.

[22] Goldin reverses this item and the next one; see *R. Nathan*, 127 and 204 nn. 19,20; also Schechter's comments in *R. Nathan*, 92 n.16

Stars in the world and stars in Adam: these are Adam's cheeks.[23]

Towers in the world and towers in Adam: this is Adam's neck.

Masts in the world and masts in Adam: these are Adam's forearms.

Pegs in the world and pegs in Adam: these are Adam's fingers.

A king in the world and a king in Adam: his head.[24]

Clusters in the world and clusters in Adam: these are Adam's breasts.

Advisers in the world and advisers in Adam: his kidneys.

Smells in the world and smells in Adam: this is Adam's stomach.

Mills in the world and mills in Adam: this is Adam's spleen.

Cisterns in the world and cisterns in Adam: this is Adam's navel.[25]

Living water in the world and living water in Adam: this is Adam's blood.

Trees in the world and trees in Adam: these are Adam's bones.

Hills in the world and hills in Adam: these are Adam's buttocks.

Pestles and mortars in the world and pestles and mortars in Adam: these are Adam's knees.

Horses in the world and horses in Adam: these are Adam's ankles.

The Angel of Death in the world and the Angel of Death in Adam: these are Adam's heels.

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[23] The text in *R. Nathan A* literally says, "cheeks in the world and cheeks in Adam: these are Adam's cheeks." I follow Goldin, *R. Nathan*, 127 and 204 n.24; also see Schechter's comments in A31,92n.21 and Lev. Rab. 18:1 (Margulies, *Wayyikra Rabbah*, 391).

[24] Schechter suggests substituting "heart," which would reinforce an order from top to bottom (*R. Nathan*, Appendix A, 147). The heart is associated with a king in *'Abot R. Nat. B*, ch. 13; Schechter, *R. Nathan*, 30; I discuss this passage as well as the understandings of the heart in rabbinic literature more broadly in Chapter Two of *The Making of a Sage*.

[25] Preuss interprets this line to indicate that "one considered the deep-lying type of navel to be the most common one;" *Talmudic Medicine*, 59.

> Mountains and valleys in the world and mountains and valleys in Adam: when he stands he resembles a mountain, and when he falls he resembles a valley.
>
> Thus you learn that all that the Holy One, blessed be He created in His world, he created in Adam (*'Abot R. Nat. A*, ch. 31).[26]

This list is very difficult to pin down in terms of both its relation to other notions of correlation and homology, and its pedagogical or rhetorical force. I will start with the features of the list itself, then examine resonances in other rabbinic sources, and finally consider similar materials in other cultural contexts.

The general structure appears to move from the upper part of the body to the lower–starting with hair and ending with heels–but this order is not strictly followed.[27] The list is quite long. There is a large proportion of items focused on the head (ears, nose, forehead, lips, teeth, tongue, cheeks, neck, head, perhaps hair) and a strong attention to fluids (mucus, urine, tears, saliva, blood). This body, though, is not fully elaborated, and the list omits a number of items that figure prominently in other rabbinic discussions. The human portrayed here is not gendered, having no penis, scrotum, or semen, and no vagina, uterus, or menstrual blood.[28] Only a couple of internal organs are named (kidneys, stomach, and spleen), and it is particularly striking that there is no mention of the heart.[29] Perhaps the most prominent bodily function is eating (lips, teeth, tongue, saliva, and stomach), though there is also no reference to excrement despite the attention to several liquid excretions. If we turn to the depiction of the "world," then perhaps most prominent are natural elements and forces, including several kinds of water (filthy, salty, sweet, living water, and also

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[26] See Schechter, *R. Nathan*, 91-92.

[27] There are significant difficulties in sorting out the order of the items among the manuscript variants. Schechter suggests an order from above to below and presents a reconstruction in *R. Nathan*, Appendix A, 147.

[28] This omission contrasts with the passages discussed in Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, esp. 197-225; Satlow, "Jewish Constructions of Nakedness;" and Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, esp. 40-67, 103-127.

[29] However, as noted above, Schechter suggests that it should be present instead of "head."

rivers). We also see certain social positions (a king and advisers), instruments in labor and production (mills, cistern, pestles and mortars, horses, pegs, and masts), and human ways of defining space (doors, walls, towers).

In large part, the passage can be seen as collecting themes that appear in the Bible and rabbinic literature. Some items are straight forwardly exegetical, as the associations of tower/neck and clusters/breasts are from lists of the body in the Song of Songs 4:4 and 7:8.[30] Other images are developed elsewhere in rabbinic material with more complex exegetical bases. Perhaps the most prominent of these is the link between the kidneys and advice or counsel, which appears in *R. Nathan* as well as other texts.[31] The image of the tongue being surrounded by walls appears amidst a discussion of malicious speech in one Babylonian passage.[32] Also, in both Palestinian and Babylonian sources, a midrash upon Eccles. 12:2– which calls upon the reader to appreciate youth "before the sun, light, stars, and moon grow dark"–presents correspondences that include the sun and the brightness of the face, light and the forehead (those two are combined in sun/forehead of *R. Nathan*), the stars and the cheeks, and also the moon and the nose (this fourth one is not in *R. Nathan*). The exegesis of Eccles. 12 continues with numerous other comments about body parts, most of

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[30] The connection between "living waters" and blood may be based on the statement in Jer. 2:13 and 17:13 that God is the source of "living waters" (linking this image with God being the source of human life).

[31] See Preuss, *Talmudic Medicine*, 102-108; See *'Abot R. Nat. A*, ch. 31, 33; Schechter, *R. Nathan*, 91-92 n.27; 94; Goldin, *R. Nathan*, 131; and *Gen. Rab.* 61:1; Theodor-Albeck, *Bereshit Rabba*, 657-658 including their listing of sources. In biblical literature, the heart and the kidneys are often paired. See Jer 11:20; also Jer 17:10; Jer 20:12; Ps 7:10. Note also *b. Ber.* 61a-b and F. C. Porter's comments in "The *Yeçer Hara*: A Study in the Jewish Doctrine of Sin." In *Biblical and Semitic Studies: Yale Historical and Critical Contributions to Biblical Science*. Yale Bicentennial Publications (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 101-102.

[32] See *b. Arakin* 15b.

which are different than in *R. Nathan*, though an association between the stomach and milling is close to the correlation of mills/spleen above.[33]

The microcosmic list in *R. Nathan* has a number of similarities to sources of cultures that, in different ways and different times, may have been contiguous with rabbis. The correspondence of heel/death may be associated with the Hellenic figure of Achilles.[34] At a larger thematic level, the list of Adam as a microcosm of the world is developed in Christian sources, and perhaps most relevant is the Slavonic *2 Enoch*, which states that God made Adam out of seven elements: flesh from earth, blood from dew and sun, eyes from the sea, bones from stone, reason from angels and clouds, veins and hair from grass, and spirit from God's spirit and the wind.[35] While there is a superficial resemblance to the passage in *R. Nathan* , few of the items are similar: blood/dew(=water), hair/grass. Perhaps more importantly, the relation between body and cosmos differs. The Christian accounts of the microcosmic Adam present Adam as being made from the earthly elements, while the rabbinic account presents juxtaposition without directionality or transformation–neither is the first human made from the elements of the earth, nor is the earth created from a human body. While most "Indo-European" accounts set out some form of directionality, two key examples do not–the Zoroastrian *Greater Bundahisn* and the Pseudo-Hippocratic *Peri Hebdomadōn*–and there is similarity between the rabbinic list and these accounts regarding as many as four items–hair/plants, blood/water, sun/eye, and breath/wind.[36]

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[33] I am summarizing Lev. Rab. 18:1 (Margulies, *Vayyikra Rabbah*, 389-393); there are small differences in *Eccles. Rab.* 12:2 and *b. S abb.* 151b.

[34] Goldin suggests this in *R. Nathan*, 204 n.30.

[35] See 2 Enoch 30:8; James Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 150; J. M. Evans, "Microcosmic Adam," *Medium Aevum* 35 (1966):38-42.

[36] On Indo-European creation imagery and the issue of directionality, I draw upon the work of Lincoln, who argues that there are nine central homologies in Indo-European cosmogonies: flesh/earth, bone/stone, hair/plants, blood/water, eyes/sun, mind/moon, brain/cloud, head/heaven, breath/wind. Of these, four are present in the rabbinic account, if we allow the nose to be the breath and the forehead to be the eyes: hair/bushes, forehead/sun, blood/water, and nose/wind. There are also clear differences, such as the rabbinic link of

What is the point of all this? The elaborate cataloguing of body parts reveals a strong sense of the human body being imbedded in and mirroring the world, from the hair to the heels, from the saliva to the urine. This list strengthens the aspects of rabbinic culture that exalt the entire body, including its most lowly or animal elements. While linking the body with the cosmos is not as strong a claim as saying that it is in God's image, the sheer length and repetition that characterizes this list makes the overall impact quite significant. I see this passage, then, as among the strands of rabbinic culture that celebrate the body as such, and this celebration reinforces both a concern for others (particularly the prohibition against murder) and a care for oneself. Such a discursive framing of corporeality counters or balances others–both within rabbinic culture and in surrounding ones–that invoke the body as a reason for lowliness or humility.

Let us return, after the trip into the ancient world, to Vanessa Ochs's contemporary formulation. When she says that *tzelem Elokim* means dignity, she is one of countless Jewish thinkers who draw upon this powerful image and specify it in ways that speak to her audience. She understands dignity to be intertwined with respect, freedom, education, appearances, and support for others. Like many ancient writers, she never states exactly what parts of humans constitute the image of the divine, but she highlights both bodily and intellectual features (appearances, education). In focusing upon respect and support for others, her theological claim has ethical implications. At the same time, there are ways that one could draw upon other aspects of traditional sources to reinforce and strengthen her vision. Her concern with freedom, for example, might be expanded and radicalized through dialogue with the

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bones with trees rather than stone. Also, few of the non-core items in the various cosmogonies fit as well. See Lincoln, *Myth, Cosmos, and Society*, 1-40; also Alex Wayman, "The Human Body as Microcosm in India, Greek Cosmology, and Sixteenth Century Europe," *History of Religions* 22/2 (1982):172-190; and M. L. West, "The Cosmology of 'Hippocrates', *De Hebdomadibus*," *The Classical Quarterly* 21/65 (1971):365-388. Urbach discusses the possible significance of the *Greater Bundahisn* in rabbinic thought, but in treating the issue of microcosmic imagery, he focuses on Philo's study of plants; see *Sages*, 230, 233.

ancient political implications of the Genesis motif that all humans, not just those in political power, are the image of God. More broadly, given that her essay has a recurring theme of medical ethics and practices, the ancient embrace of the body as divine, the upholding of its care as a sacred act, and the configuring of the body as a microcosm of the entire cosmos, could provide inspiration and symbolic resources for people engaged in the healing of today's bodies. While I have focused on only one of the ten sensibilities, this exercise would well be done for any of them. When considered from the perspective of Jewish tradition in its breadth and diversity, qualities such as distinguishing, repentance or turning, honoring, and others do not have univocal or fixed meanings, but rather exist within a broad set of resonances, scriptural associations, and debates that have spanned the course of centuries.

Material from this essay also appears in a longer study: Jonathan Schofer, "The Beastly Body in Rabbinic Self-Formation." In *Seeking Selves in Ancient Religion*, edited by D. Brakke, M. Satlow, and S. Weitzman (under consideration). Parts were published in an earlier response to Vanessa Ochs' work as J. Schofer, "In the Image of God," *Sh'ma* 34 (2003): 5.